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RUEHAK/AMEMBASSY ANKARA 5794
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 3505
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 3369
RUEHIT/AMCONSUL ISTANBUL 4036
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 1204
RHMCSUU/CDR USCENCOM MACDILL AFB FL
RUEHVEN/USMISSION USOSCE 4010
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC
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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 ASHGABAT 001326

SENSITIVE

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TAGS: [PHUM](#) [KTIP](#) [PGOV](#) [TX](#)

SUBJECT: TELEPHONE HOTLINES: TREND OR TOOL?

REF: ASHGABAT 557

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¶1. (U) Sensitive but Unclassified. Not for Internet distribution

¶2. (SBU) SUMMARY: Using international donor community funding, local NGOs Ynam, Keik Okara, and the National Red Crescent Society of Turkmenistan have established or plan to set up telephone hotlines to provide the public with counseling services and legal assistance on Trafficking in Persons (TIP) and domestic violence issues. Such hotlines not only serve as critical tools for people to address their problems but also help to prevent crime by equipping the public with information on how to avoid becoming a victim. It was unexpected that Turkmen authorities gave permission for these hotlines. This is undeniably a positive step toward increasing tolerance toward NGOs and demonstrating the value they play in society. END SUMMARY.

IOM EXPERIENCE

¶3. (SBU) The International Organization for Migration (IOM) opened a TIP hotline in Turkmenistan in January 2009. The hotline is open 12 hours a day and receives an average of 5-7 calls daily. IOM provided a grant of \$3000 to a local NGO, Ynam, which already had its own hotline, in order to provide additional TIP-related and labor migration assistance. Ynam's hotline assistance initially included some counseling services, legal advice, and reproductive health counseling (reftel).

¶4. (SBU) IOM Turkmenistan developed an initiative to establish a telephone hotline to raise the population's awareness of TIP in June 2006, borrowing from the experience of other Central Asian IOM offices. Mainly, people ask questions such as, "We want to go to Turkey to work. What is needed?" IOM is currently working with the government to establish a direct hotline number that would enable people in the provinces to call without incurring long-distance charges. According to Tahir Seidov, Senior Program Assistant of IOM in Turkmenistan, "Once the direct number is set up, the number of TIP victims might increase, due to awareness, especially in rural areas." Seidov thinks that the hotline will also help to uncover human traffickers.

15. (SBU) IOM works with the following seven NGOs and International Organizations on anti-trafficking in Turkmenistan: Keik Okara, Bilgirje, Ynam, Lachin, Women's Union, Youth Union, Bosfor, and National Red Crescent Society of Turkmenistan. So far, IOM has assisted 16 TIP victims in 2009. According to Seidov, TIP-related crimes are committed against citizens of Turkmenistan mainly in Turkey and Russia. When a TIP victim from Turkmenistan is discovered, for instance, in Turkey, the IOM Office in Turkey informs IOM Turkmenistan that a TIP victim will be arriving on a certain air flight. IOM Turkmenistan then informs the Turkmen Migration Service and its partner NGOs, who then meet the victim and provide counseling services. Due to a lack of sufficient financing, IOM does not yet have a shelter, but is working to establish one. IOM also published and disseminated various information bulletins on TIP prevention. Seidov noted that Turkmen Government assistance from the MFA and Migration Services has markedly improved over the last two years. IOM cooperates with both registered and unregistered organizations. It informs MFA of its projects, but does not need to register them.

RED CRESCENT EXPERIENCE

16. (SBU) In October 2009, the National Red Crescent Society of Turkmenistan (NRCST) completed the OSCE-funded four-month project "Raising Awareness of Population on TIP." For the project, NRCST conducted Training of Trainers sessions on TIP and a working meeting with state authorities on implementation of anti-trafficking mechanisms. The next phase of the project, if implemented, would envisage setting up a hotline in five cities where it has provincial offices. Once established, NRCST would like to make the hotline available in all 47 of its district branches and in large cities. According to NRCST officials, however, the hotline would be called a

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hotline on migration issues because many people in rural areas would be confused by the term TIP.

17. (SBU) Leila Toiliyeva, Project Manager for NRCST, said that during train-the-trainer sessions, 80 percent of the questions were related to the provision of legal consultation for relatives of those who left to work or study abroad and then disappeared. They were looking for advice on how to find their lost family members. She asserted that public organizations are needed to provide counseling services to TIP victims. She also opined that it is important to conduct TIP prevention activities before potential travelers leave the country, since Turkmenistan is a country of origin for TIP victims. NRCST has already trained five people in each province of Turkmenistan and published a brochure entitled: "TIP - What should we know?" that also contains telephone numbers for each NRCST provincial office where people can get assistance on TIP issues. Toiliyeva underscored the importance of working jointly with Migration Service and other law-enforcement authorities increase TIP awareness. While there is a law on anti-trafficking, Turkmenistan's Criminal Code adopted in the early 1990s lacks articles on anti-trafficking, without them, it is difficult to legally define the term "TIP victim."

KEIK OKARA EXPERIENCE

18. (SBU) A local NGO Keik Okara recently launched an OSCE-funded, six month project for a telephone hotline on domestic violence. The project envisions counseling and legal consultations, and domestic violence training sessions. According to Deputy Director of Keik Okara Sabir Agabalayev, 70 percent of incoming calls are calls on other issues, and only 30 percent are calls on domestic violence. Although, primarily women are victims of domestic violence, men also call reporting problems. At this stage, Keik Okara provides only consultation services. An announcement about the launch of the hotline will be published in local newspapers, and the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) has registered the project. According to Agabalayev, MoJ registration means that the authorities recognize the problem, which is a change compared to the standard "there are no problems in Turkmenistan" attitude.

19. (SBU) COMMENT: A new trend of launching telephone hotlines on

TIP, domestic violence, and other acute problems in Turkmenistan is a positive step. The existence of these hotlines indicates that the authorities recognize the problems and are taking action to address them with the help of international organizations and local NGOs. The hotlines may serve as an effective tool for allowing Turkmen victims of crime to get the assistance citizens of some other countries already can receive. END COMMENT.

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